DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 465 021 CE 083 238

AUTHOR Roberson, Donald N., Jr.
TITLE Learning Experiences of Senior Travelers.
PUB DATE 2002-00-00
NOTE 20p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *Adult Learning; Cultural Awareness; Educational Research; Ethnocentrism; *Experiential Learning; *Foreign Culture; *Learning Experience; *Older Adults; Self Concept; Self Evaluation (Individuals); *Travel; Trust (Psychology)
IDENTIFIERS Reflective Thinking

ABSTRACT

A study examined learning experiences of older adults during travel. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposively selected sample of 8 individuals aged 56-89. Questions were directed at the nature of their most significant travel experiences and what they learned. Four themes emerged from the data: learning about self, learning about trust, learning about the world, and learning about home. Learning about self was evident within the messy details of travel, from interaction with others, and in personal and critical reflection about their trip. These novel experiences resulted in an empowering framework of learning about who they are, what they can do, and how they see themselves. Learning about trust involved new lessons of dependence about themselves, people they are around during travel, and their God. Globetrotting destroyed ethnocentricity and helped them understand and appreciate different cultures. Travel changed people by broadening perspective and teaching new ways to measure quality of life. Travelers returned with a stronger, more positive appreciation of home and discussed learning something new, interesting, or surprising and stated some implications of travel were that they learned more about other cultures, religions, and groups of people. An important consideration for researchers might be the lack of personal reflection by travelers. (Contains 35 references.) (YLB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

D. Roberson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

ED 465 021

Learning Experiences of Senior Travelers

Donald N. Roberson, Jr.
300 Richard Way, Athens, Georgia 30605

706-543-0001

droberso@coe.uga.edu

Learning Experiences of Senior Travelers

Older adults are choosing to travel in growing numbers each year. Most research on older travelers focuses on how to market travel opportunities to this age segment. The purpose of this investigation was to examine the learning experiences of older adults during travel. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposively selected sample of eight individuals ranging in ages from 56 to 89. Questions were directed at the nature of their most significant travel experiences and what they learned. Four themes emerged from the data: learning about self, learning about trust, learning about the world, and learning about home.

Learning Experiences of Senior Travelers

Sitting around the dinner table in the comfortable home, the couple was excitedly discussing their trips. She interrupted, holding her hands out as if to stop the animated exchange, "Just a minute," she quickly fetched

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

a basket full of small rocks. Walking as if she was carrying a baby, she delicately placed them amid papers and next to the tape recorder. With thoughtful expression she said, "Each rock is from a different country." The three of us just stopped and looked; all you could hear was the quiet buzz from the tape recorder. She would pick up a rock and begin telling a story, where it was from, and what she learned in that country. Holding it delicately in her fingers, lifted up suspended in space, each rock was a tangible and dusty reminder of a wonderful story.

This is the story of eight people, their travels, and what they learned. Travel can resemble a mobile and accessible school greeting sojourners with multifarious opportunities for learning in every port. The traveler has the potential to become a student and the context of travel becomes the school. As with any situation in school, a great deal of learning depends on the student, and there are a host of contextual issues confounding this knowledge. The inspiring teacher that motivates the student is similar to an inspiring tour guide that can lead travelers to insightful discoveries. This situated cognition on the road allows for a self-directed learning experience with the world as the traveler's laboratory (Garrison, 1997).

A recent article in the Wall Street Journal indicated that travel and tourism is a 3.6 trillion dollar per year industry, affecting 231 million jobs. Older and retired adults have more money, time, and energy to see "what's on the other side of the hill" than any other age segment (Wall Street Journal, January 11, 1999). To capture this market the tourist industry entices the ticket buyer with everything from romance to thrills to serenity. Yet this profitable industry may lure travelers to empty destinations and leave them unfulfilled and disillusioned (Milman, 1998). The variety of ways in which travel impacts the lives of older travelers is therefore an important problem. This paper focuses on the significance and potential of learning in travel in the lives of older adults.

Current research on older travelers deals mainly with travel preferences of market segments, but as such, this information seems to serve marketing interests rather than travelers themselves. Research journals are dominated by insightful studies on tourism and travel covering an interesting array of topics (Bas, 1992; Haber & Lerner, 1998; Hawes, 1988; Horna, 1995; te Kloeze, 1995; Mackay, Lamont, & Partridge, 1996; Maiztegui-Onate, 1996; Panic-Kombal, 1996; Reisenger, 1994; Shoemaker, 1989; Vierda, 1998, Williams, 1992). Yet, it seems that a great deal of research is market oriented, focused on consumerism, and the voice of the traveler is often missing. Research is needed that more clearly defines the impact of travel experiences on the older individual. The sheer volume of travelers attests to the popularity of travel; however, the impact of that travel needs to be critically addressed. Can travel be more than materialistic shopping trips, mass tour buses that isolate travelers from locations they desire to see, or self-indulgent excursions that take advantage of third world countries?

This perspective on travel is similar to the view of popular travel writer Steves (1999) who says, "Travel is intensified living - maximum thrills per minute and one of the last great sources of legal adventure. Travel is freedom. It's recess, and we need it" (Steves, p. viii). Travelers have the opportunity to learn not just about new places or historical and

cultural sites; as shown by this study, there is the potential in travel to learn new perspectives about one's life. Mrs. Israel stated, "It [travel] broadens you…education…your perspective…your tolerance of other cultures…and an appreciation of what you have here."

The purpose of the study was to explore the nature of learning experiences created during travel with older adults. To that end the following research questions were addressed:

1. What types of learning experiences do older travelers identify?
2. What are the conditions that contribute to learning in travel?

Method

The researcher incorporated qualitative interviews as the method for addressing these research questions. For that purpose the researcher sought older individuals who were frequent travelers and likely to have had significant travel experiences.

To screen for participants, a survey was mailed to 50 travelers asking basic questions about their travel experience. These 50 purposively selected people were older than 55 and were recommended for the research by people who knew them. Questions on this initial survey included the following: Personal information; Trips taken in the last five years; Which trips were most meaningful - why and why not; Who traveled with you and how did this impact the trip; Do you sense any personal change because of this trip; Problems encountered on this trip and permission to conduct an interview. Of this number 26 returned the questionnaire, and from that group eight were chosen for interviews.

This purposively selected sample (Patton, 1990) of eight was chosen because they had extensive travel experience and reported significant learning during travel. The eight individuals were contacted by phone for a brief interview explaining the purpose of the study and to investigate if there was an impact from travel. During the phone conversation it was ascertained these eight individuals had more significant learning experiences than the other 26 participants. Even though three couples were identified, each partner indicated they had significant learning experiences and spoke for themselves during the interviews. The demographics reflected three married couples, one widowed female, one single male; seven were Caucasian, and one was African American. All eight were eager to be a part of this study.

The semi-structured interviews were focused around the following questions. Tell me about the trip that was most meaningful to you? What was it about this trip that had a special meaning for you? Do you sense any change because of this trip? Is there anything else about the trip that impacted you? What is different now because of your trip? These questions were mailed to the 8 participants before the interview so they could consider their responses (Seidman, 1998).

Each interview took place in the home of the participant except for Mr. Brazil who recorded the answers to the interview questionnaire and mailed the tape. Each interview was transcribed by myself soon after the interview. After the first interview, I began data analysis and then compared answers with the next interviewee. During the interview, the researcher attempted to set a psychologically safe environment for the participants to express their desire narrative (Seidman, 1998). In addition, because of previous knowledge of each participant, this

contributed to the breadth of the interview, and helped to complete a greater portrait of the participant (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

Data Analysis

After each interview was transcribed, responses were coded, and tentative categories were generated (Patton, 1990). These categories were then revised through a process of constant comparison as each subsequent interview was analyzed (Merriam, 1998). This research is also a re-analysis of data from an earlier study focusing on the recreational pursuit of travel.

Profiles of Sample

This sample of eight people has participated in 68 trips within the last five years.

Mr. and Mrs. Maine: They are so named because their most recent trip was a meaningful whale watching experience off the coast of Maine. She is 81, he is 88. Recent trips in the last few years were to India, Nepal, Turkey, Canadian Rockies, and Massachusetts. When asked about learning on trips - he said, "Read the book I wrote about my travels."

Mr. and Mrs. Belarus: They are so named because of the impact of a trip to Belarus of the former Soviet Union. She is 56, he is 57. Recent trips in the last few years were to the Alps, Italy, Utah, Arizona, Alaska, Washington, D.C., Germany, Belarus, Seattle, San Diego, Yellowstone, Disney World, and Cleveland. She has been a travel agent, and he travels throughout the world with his work. When asked about learning on trips, she stated that because of the trip to Belarus, she appreciates life in the USA and wants to simplify their life.

Mr. and Mrs. Israel: They are so named because of the impact of a trip to Israel. She is 63, he is 69. Recent trips include Italy, Sicily, Greece, Turkey, Israel, Canada, England, and Scotland. Learning in travel included a significant personal change, especially on a trip to Israel.

Mrs. Germany: Ms. Germany is so named because she specifically discussed a trip to Germany. She is 82 years old. Recent trips include Pacific Northwest, Florida, Hawaii, New York City, Europe (three times), Missouri, Tennessee, and New York. When asked about learning in travel, she mentioned the trip to Europe and how this experience enabled her to learn more about the world.

Mr. Brazil: Mr. Brazil is so named because of the impact of a recent trip to Brazil. He is 75 years old. He has been on trips to Brazil and Hawaii in the last few years. When asked about learning, he discussed in detail how the trip to Brazil shattered his beliefs about race.

Findings

Four main themes were generated from the data: Learning about self, Learning about trust, Learning about the world, and Learning about home. Travel for this sample became more than just excursions during allotted vacation time; each traveler spoke with passion and clarity about learning experiences during these various adventures.

Learning About Self

Travelers return home with fresh ideas, thoughts, and perspectives. This cognition is often new and empowering knowledge about self. Eating, living, moving, and thinking in a variety of situations will teach the sojourner novel lessons about themselves that prove more valuable than choice souvenirs. This empowering learning about self seems to be focused

around the details of travel, seeing others in new cultural backdrops, as well as seeing the self in new contexts.

The details of travel one encounters on a trip can be a daunting experience. Many travelers participate in large group tours or mass tourism, which usually requires the traveler to follow directions or a guide. This mindless tourist (Urry, 1990) simply follows directions, is often overwhelmed by the experience, withdraws, and is often critical of the culture. However, independent travelers must learn a number of details in order to complete the trip. Travelers' experiences are often somewhere between mass tourism and independent traveling, exhibiting a range of behavior from merely showing up to arranging all the details. This type of operational learning is a necessary element in order to complete a trip and includes managing a great deal of detail. Similar to Pearce's (1988) notion of a travel career, travelers take trips to meet their personal needs and often learn to negotiate the perils of travel and become more independent in their travel goals (Ryan, 1998). Learning how to travel and negotiate the complicated details of travel takes the 'student' beyond operational learning to becoming more confident about maneuvering independently in today's world. Conquering the details of travel, interacting with fellow travelers, and chronicling personal impact, teaches the traveler about self. This new and empowering knowledge of self results in more confidence about the self and their world.

Mrs. Maine states, "I also learned in the train stations of Europe there is a wealth of information…if you will just look for it…we learned how to order food…how to use the tourist booths in the train station." She continued her dialogue by discussing how she learned by watching other people, locals who know the culture, observing them, and what they are doing. For example, while on a long train trip, she noticed a man who would quickly exit the train, and come back with food. Becoming hungry with each passing kilometer, she allowed this scenario to teach an important lesson of how locals acquire food during quick train stops. This type of learning resulted in more comfortable travel and more confidence in travel. The husband of this traveler discusses how they would travel: "We prefer the very simple things…we chose a small ship, a working ship…and went up to the North Gate of Norway." They learned how to manage the details of travel in simple and economical ways that brought them close to local people and its culture. Never wanting to stay in luxurious accommodations or touristy locales, they learned how to travel in ways that defy glitzy travel brochures and in a method that reflected their economic mindset. Mrs. Maine discusses the importance of attitude in travel, "Go with the right attitude - we are going to have an adventure! We wake up every morning and say - what wonderful adventure is going to come our way?"

Learning in travel also takes the form of preparation. Like a farmer preparing a field before planting, travelers will reap greater rewards if attention to detail by preparation beforehand is considered. Mr. and Mrs. Belarus explain, "We started 7 or 8 months beforehand…it adds to the trip a lot…it builds the excitement, the curiosity…and points me into different directions that I may not have thought of." Mrs. Israel states, "I always do a lot of homework before a trip…and during the trip I follow along…like at Hadrian's Wall, you read about it…and then you are there." This

laboratory on the road allows the traveler to see the world as their personal independent study. These travelers can plan, choose, and focus on whatever experiment they wish. Reflecting ideas of andragogy (Knowles, 1985) reading beforehand, during, and after the trip, confirms learning as well as promotes self-directed knowledge. Several participants discussed how purchasing a travel guide increased their learning. Many bookstores have had to make room for slick, glossy travel books promising unbelievable adventures. Some of the most popular are "Let's Go," "Lonely Planet," "Rough Guides," and "Frommer Guides". Steves (1999) states, "Those who think of the planning stage as part of the experience invest wisely and enjoy tremendous returns. Study ahead. This kind of homework is fun. Take advantage of the wealth of material available: guidebooks, classes, videos, libraries, and tourist information offices" (p.7).

Travel occurs in the company of others, from a close companion, a small group from home, or a large bus tour. Being away from home can bring forth unique issues of homesickness and culture stress creating the potential for this group of fellow travelers to become its own unique learning community. In the context of close friendships or bothersome conflicts, travelers can learn a great deal about themselves as they react within this movable world. Ms. Germany said,

We went on to Brussels, we were there for three days, we went on up to Brugges…I would have enjoyed it more, see I did not have a roommate, and they were always worried about me…I would want to stay longer in these shops and things…finally I said I am going to the museum…they said, " Oh you can't go by yourself." I finally got away from everybody, and spent the rest of my day in the museum.

These minuscule negotiations, such as when to meet the group, how to break away, disappointing others, or how to change the trip, have the potential to teach the traveler about self in relation to others. Interestingly, people who travel together often form an unusually close bond; this dependence on one another may arise from a psychological motivation to create a sense of safety in a rapidly changing world (Maslow, 1970). This potentially puts extra strains on relations, and also creates unique scenarios for learning about self. Ms. Germany explains her frustration, "The group would not leave me alone…I thought it was very kind of them to be worried about me, but I kind of wanted to be left alone." Having been recently widowed, she was discovering how people viewed her as well as learning about social situations as a single older woman.

Newly discovered inner dimensions that occur in travel often quickly replace external issues of self. It is one thing to learn how to get on a train from Zurich to Florence, but travel also promotes learning that goes beyond the operational to the interiority of the person. Wondering at the beauty of the human body while gazing at the David statue is a different type of learning than the skills needed to find a hotel room in crowded Florence. Ms. Germany states, "Everything was new to me…traveling is the most educational thing you can do…you are broadened, and I gained a lot of self-esteem by taking these trips…I learned how to get around in a foreign country." These internal negotiations in a foreign land result in a strong and more reliant inner self. She continues, "I do feel more confident and broader…since taking all these trips." Mr.

Belarus said: "Over the years you learn something about yourself traveling…your sense of importance or lack thereof."

This broadening, which many travelers mention, can take various forms. During the trip, travelers can leisurely choose to participate in a class, a lecture, a concert, or a tour. Because of the removal from distractions and busyness of life back home, there is a clean mental slate for the wanderer to fill with self-directed educational choices (Houle, 1984). Within the context of travel there is the potential to learn a great deal about a multitude of topics. Ms. Germany continues, "I learned how glass was made…you learn the history of things." Seeing special places in their unique settings may set the environment for what one participant called surprise learning. Mr. Belarus discusses,

It's learning little things like visiting the tapestries in Normandy…One of the most unique inventions that occurred in that battle was the stirrup…because this gave a great advantage to the horse rider, little things like that…It's the surprise learning.

This broadening quickly became inspirational for one couple during a trip to Israel as they realized they were standing in the pivotal place from which their faith is based. "Just to be in the spot…you know where Jesus has been…just how awesome it felt to be there…It's strengthened my faith."

In summary, learning about self is evident in various ways. The traveler can learn about self within the messy details of travel, from interaction with others, and in personal and critical reflection about their trip. These novel experiences have resulted in an empowering framework of learning about who they are, what they can do, and how they see themselves.

Learning about Trust

A simple trip to another country can evolve into a personal discovery of dependence; the traveler realizes the importance of trusting others. Leaving personal details and issues into the hands of others can create trust, safety, and confidence in the traveler. Travel, especially travel in a foreign country, is daily fraught with confusing details of unknown information. An itinerary may depend on the negotiating of mysterious directions and making decisions about undecipherable information. In foreign countries, because of the lack of a common language, the traveler learns about trust in a variety of situations. Traveling out of the safety net of one's home can put the traveler in experiences of difficulty, hardship, and even danger (Milman, 1998). The wanderer will have to learn to trust; this trust may involve themselves, others, or their God. Regardless, there is a stepping out into the unknown and this inclusion of trust can offer comfort and hope in dauntingly overwhelming situations.

One traveler speaks about learning to trust during a situation involving the exchange of money. Ms. Maine states:

I think the important thing was in North Europe, I did not know how to make change…so I would hold out my hand in order to…and they would take whatever coins they wanted of it…and you could see the look in their face…they were not quite sure…maybe 'oh goody' here is an opportunity to take more than I should…or I was testing them…so I learned to trust people more than I had ever realized…and that people are nice wherever you go.

This lesson in trust was taken a step further a few days later.

When Anne and I got to Europe, we were in Cherbourg, and they would not sell me any milk…cause I did not say the right word. We did not have any supper the night before because we could not make ourselves understood. We got to the boat…I had to give them all the money I had…they would not take American Express traveler's checks…I had to dump my pocketbook out and give them German, French money…all I had…and we got on that boat and we were sort of depressed, and we just barely made it on the boat…and I found out the boat was British and they took American Express…we were the happiest people you ever saw, we bought two breakfasts.

When one is in a foreign country, the barriers of language and confusion about money often put travelers in difficult situations. These circumstances, which often work out, become similar to Havighurst's teachable moments of trust as well as learning by experience (as cited in Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Thomashaw, 1998). In addition Milman (1998) discusses how travel usually does not meet up to the expectations exhibited within the brochures and promises of the travel agent. As shown by this sample, it is in those times, when the details of a trip go awry that lessons of trust begin.

Mr. Maine says, "When you travel in unusual ways, things are going to happen." These "things" often become impromptu learning lesson entitled "How to trust." These situations may involve what Mezirow (2000) names "disorienting dilemmas." The disorienting dilemma has the potential to grab the attention of the traveler and create a potential for change. For Mr. Maine, the learning in this situation was to trust in God, to rely with confidence that there is an unseen cosmic dimension at work in his life.

Mr. Maine discusses his bicycle ride around the world:

I got to Jerusalem and went to the King David YMCA, brand new beautiful thing…I did not put my sleeping bag down…it was sunset and I wanted to climb the Mt. Of Olives…and take a picture...so I did…and walking down the Mt. Of Olives…they locked me in the area…I had my sleeping bag…one of the most wonderful nights of sleep ever…I went back the next morning, the wing of the YMCA was not there…where I was supposed to stay…it got blown up.

In another dangerous situation he recalls, "I was in the marketplace and 17 people in 1936 …about 20 Jews had their heads cut off all around me, they would take a long machete and smash their heads…if you have too much of this you got to call it miracles and we have had a lot of miracles."

This surrender to the inevitable leads to personal steps of trust and faith that have been personally crafted by unseen travel agents.

Another traveler discusses a trip to the Holy Land and the impact of being around danger. She states how their tour guide would pray for their safety: "He knew where to take us, and where not to take us because of the danger." This subtle recognition of lurking danger and mischief can add a hidden dimension of excitement to the trip. Thinking aloud, Ms. Israel realized that successfully returning home after being in dangerous sites results in a dimension of trust that impacts her life.

Although I did not specifically ask this sample about safety, the issue of danger and trust in travel was often on the mind of travelers. Ms. Belarus mentioned,

We were having a bad experience on the plane, I was having thyroid problems, and resulting panic attacks…we had to circle Atlanta…then

eventually leave, and land in Cincinnati, you could tell a lot of people were praying on that plane, you could just feel it…my nerves were pretty raw…and I did not want to get on a plane for awhile.

The fear of flying may produce internal anxiety in each traveler that is negotiated and renegotiated by internal promises and self-counseling. Travelers may hold fear at bay looking through a magazine, repressing the potential of harm, listening to music, taking a pill, or drinking several drinks. Each person in someway deals with the potential of the danger of flying. Juggernauting over the ocean at 500 miles an hour or landing in a fog- bound airport takes each traveler on an internal destination of trust, trust in others, and trust in the unknown.

In summary, this learning about trust involved new lessons of dependence about themselves, people they are around during travel, and even their God.

Learning the Globe - the Culture and the Geography of the World

Trips and excursions may evolve from pleasure retreats to specific learning ventures. Rather than just a three-week tour through Italy, the traveler returns with specific knowledge about the culture and geography of Italy. These sojourners have seemingly metamorphosed into colonies of workers who are unearthing the terra ferma by discovering and learning its culture and geography.

Mr. Maine said:

The one trip I learned about humanity was the bicycle trip around the world…I stopped at youth hostels…haylofts…barns…I learned there are more good people in the world than bad…I learned…if I treated someone as if they were good…then usually they were…I learned to be tolerant of other people cause they are more alike than different…and it develops a sensitivity for other people.

This theme of learning about people and the varieties of the culture throughout the world are repeated in each interview. Steves (1999) states, "Give a culture the benefit of your open mind. See things as different, but not better or worse. Any culture has much to share" (p.viii). Simply stated, Steves and Mr. and Ms. Maine would push the traveler to enrich their trip by reaching out and getting to know local people as well as experiencing the native culture.

Another traveler stated how living and staying with her German in-laws resulted in a greater depth of knowledge about the world. She relates how much she learned about Germany:

He (my son's Father-in-law) was…13…he was put in Hitler's Youth Army, they gave him a bazooka and a bicycle and told him to go and fight…that was his training…His father was a doctor, so he wanted to be a doctor, he wanted to go to the University, but they told him no, you have had enough education…So he left East Germany, before they had erected the wall…but their families were still in east Germany.

Getting to know locals on a personal basis, hearing about their lives, and especially their history adds a cognitive dimension to travel. This new knowledge is what many travelers called broadening, expanding, understanding, and perhaps is how Csikszentmihalyi (1988) would designate the complexification of the self during intensely enjoyable moments called "flow."

Ms. Germany further describes her experience of living with a

local family:
And I would go to the market with them…She goes everyday…They don't go and buy a bunch of groceries like we do. If she needs a fish she will go to the market and get a fish. But she does cook and freeze like we do. They don't do a lot of cooking like we do…They made a cake for Jim's birthday, a perfectly made jelly roll…Her kitchen is about this big (refers to about one quarter of her kitchen), everything is stainless steel…When you rent an apartment, it is just the bare walls, you have to bring everything in, closets, and kitchen cabinets…And they don't have any fancy beds, there will be a bed frame, a good bed, and a comforter…and every morning they hang it out the window, every morning you shake the table cloth out the window…But their houses are very neat, and very well planned…but I learned a lot about how they live.

The context of living and interacting with locals can take this level of knowledge to a new dimension. This active interaction has the possibility to disrupt assumptions we have about other cultures and to see our life in a new light. This learning during experience, or situated cognition (Stein, 1998), increases one's knowledge of the world in a greater dimension than mere reading in the comfort of one's home. This current knowledge of German life presents a clearer picture of the world and its various complexities. This woman is no longer confined to stereotypes of Germany; she has actually become friends with some German people and has learned about their life. This learning from experience is a repeated theme in adult education reflecting similar ideas from Dewey to Bateson (cited in Merriam and Caffarella, 1999).

Mr. and Ms. Belarus explain how as a result of travel they no longer try to form judgment about other cultures. Mr. Belarus said:
Our enthusiasm of our trips, and what we have learned… that is more important than having a Mercedes…and trying not to form judgments about other cultures…Western culture is Christian based, and is definitely in decline, because we have lost sight of what is important…If you look at other cultures…Chinese, Middle Eastern is very much grounded in family.

This look, this peering into other countries with an open mind can teach the traveler valuable lessons about cultures of the world as well as their own. This dialectical discussion, between what we do, and what they do, can form an interior classroom of learning about the life, culture, and customs of people across the globe. Contrasts can enable the open minded traveler to reframe their likes and dislikes through the lens of other cultures.

Mr. and Ms. Israel discuss how travel has impacted them. "…We are fortunate to have gone on a trip…it broadens you…education…your perspective…your tolerance of other cultures." They continue this thought, " [We have] broader perspectives of the cultures, you see things that were built 400 years before Columbus came to America…over here 100 years is old!" Seeing these contrasts between your world and their world, your home and their home helps one to learn by noting differences and similarities. Traveling the globe can impact the learning one has about geography. Mr. and Mrs. Israel state:
Everyday on television we are exposed to some perspective, some geography, to look at that…like the Coliseum, and to know that you have been there, I find that really interesting…We love the history channel…and often there

is something about an area we have been to.
Learning about the globe continues after one has traveled to a certain site, and may be confirmed by television or the newspaper. This seems to shrink the globe into a more livable place and a more knowable planet.

Another traveler learned details about the world, and as mentioned earlier, this shifted his knowledge of previous assumptions. Mr. Brazil states,

I had also had this kind of naïve notion on this matter of race that the people of Brazil had a more…had a better solution, with this whole thing of emancipation and of integrating the people of color into their communities, that they had done a better job with that. Now indeed in Brazil there are many, many shades of people as a result of the intermarriage of the various kinds over the years…I found after some observation, take for example during this carnival parade, that as the various groups would come by, it occurred to me that some groups were all white, some were all brown skin, some were all black, none of them were very highly integrated.

The same traveler has discovered new knowledge as a result of this trip:

I noticed that there would be many integrated groups, but on closer examination the darker skin woman in the group would very often be the nanny of this lighter skin family, so when I talked with my host family I discovered that there is indeed a separation between people based on racial designation.

This new information about the world, this noticing, discovering, and finding new information has helped to form new ideas and beliefs about his world. This learning and impact was taken to a deep level by staying and interacting with the host family. Mr. Brazil continues:

Another thing that made this trip very meaningful for me, was the fortunate circumstance of staying with this couple. She being a native Brazilian, who had spent all of her life there and she spoke very good English and Portuguese, and she was a very good resource, and several things occurred in our discussions.

This man's vacation to Brazil had become a learning experience through, seeing, hearing, and discussing the life of the Brazilians over coffee and local dishes with his host. Similar to Ms. Germany, these daily tutors had a large impact on this man's trip. He discussed the interaction and the continual learning that he received about the country as a result of these conversations. He discussed at length how he learned about the current economic situation in the country and the unique history of the country of Brazil.

This experiential learning or situated cognition (Stein, 1998) goes beyond an academic affair to leisure philosophy named flow, which is characterized by context of free will, concentration, and enchantment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Mr. Brazil continues,

When I walked the beaches of north of Salvador with my camera…when I was downtown Salvador, when I was in the suburbs of Salvador you see all huge shapes, sizes, configurations of nose, eyes, color, just a vast rainbow like appearance and this was a very satisfying and freeing for me, I found it very freeing sort of a thing.

In summary, this learning echoes the philosophy of Steves (1999), "Globetrotting destroys ethnocentricity. It helps you understand and

appreciate different cultures. Travel changes people. It broadens perspective and teaches new ways to measure quality of life. Many travelers toss aside their hometown blinders. Their prized souvenirs are the strands of different cultures they decide to knot into their own character" (p.viii).

Learning about Home

One of the aspects of learning in this sample is that which involves learning about home. Rediscovering one's dwelling in a far away land creates a new perspective about home. This type of learning is usually set within a series of contrasts, realizing what is different between home and the places one visits. Interestingly, travelers return with a dual knowledge, a greater appreciation of home as well as a more discriminating perspective.

A common theme is that travelers return with a stronger, more positive appreciation of home. This new perspective of home could be a desire to return to that which is most culturally comfortable. Yet the context is that after traveling there is a longing to return to home and a greater appreciation about home.

Mr. Maine stated:

I don't think we would be quite as appreciative of our blessings here [laughter]…Some of the places we have been, [looking into space and thinking]…India for instance, and all the poor kids…just living on the streets, sleeping on the streets…Of course we have problems - racial things - our slavery times …In Ireland I stopped to get some milk in a dairy and a man was crying, his daughter had just been killed by a terrorist bombing…It makes you feel bad that people can not get along…All the differences political and religious, there is only one universe [laughter].

Mrs. Belarus says the following as a result of traveling to a central European country:

It helped me appreciate all that we have in this country…to the point where, I feel somewhat guilty that we have so much. I really think we value too much materialism…I live in a really nice house, and my daughter's babysitter 'Olga' came to visit us here, I was almost guilty…I had been in her apartment, and what is she going to think ?…I wanted to get down and kiss the floor when we got back and I went to Kroger, and when the lady at the store asked me, "What do you want, paper or plastic?" I almost burst out in laughter. They did not know what was wrong, so I explained [what the stores were like over there]….

It appears as if someone is teaching all travelers when returning to say, as Mrs. Israel expressed, " [the overall effect of this trip]…an appreciation of what you have here." This positive reinforcement of home helps to teach the traveler the significance of their current life, to realize things they may take for granted, and to live in a more positive way.

However, this learning about home may not always be in a positive light. Often this new discovery about home includes a discerning and critical perspective of home. Mr. Belarus states,

I was in Venezuela a couple of months ago, and you get down there, and you realize the world does not revolve around America, USA, most Americans don't think that is the case…You get a sense that many things going on

here have no significance over there…We saw in France a news report about Stone Mountain [this is near their home]…about a lady who was seeing Jesus in a plate of spaghetti…Over the years, you learn something about yourself traveling…It's a good experience to humble yourself [as in the example in France]….I will never forget going in to Aberdeen Harbor, and the tour guide said these boat people have probably never stepped foot on dry land…It's so different over there…Human rights from an American's point of view is not that particular country's, too often we are telling other countries to adopt our standards…That is being culturally ignorant…We have forced so much of our culture on other countries.

Mrs. Belarus states that,

I do think a lot about that trip to Belarus, and the choices we had versus the choices we have here, not to be such a consumer as I used to be…When I think about the amount of garbage we have, all the commercialism we now have at Christmas, just the catalogues we have…the number of trees we chop down, to make us think we need things we don't need… We are used to instant gratification…We have learned to be more patient.

Similar to a critical view (Brookfield, 1995), Mr. Brazil discusses how learning in travel has resulted in new knowledge that has significantly reshaped and disrupted former assumptions about his race:

I found an odd appreciation for all the angst [mild laughter] and problems and troubles that we [Black Americans] historically have dealt with in this country over race matters, and as we continue to do so…And I came away from there, feeling oddly enough, that there is something to be said about the struggles and efforts that are continued to be made in this country to rectify these issues…I went on this trip truly with an agenda. I was hoping to find a different kind of a solution to the problems of racism and skin color living together… So this was hard for me, but it is a reality that was there, and I just have to change my assumptions that I had hoped to find in that country.

This school of travel has also become a course in the development of personal character. Quickly forgotten museums and cathedrals are replaced with authentic learning about self, trust, home, and the world. Confirming these findings are the words of Steves (1999), "Travel is addicting. It can make you a happier American, as well as a citizen of the world. Our Earth, is home to nearly six billion equally important people. It is humbling to travel and find that people don't envy Americans. Europeans like us, but with all due respect, they wouldn't trade passports" (Steves, 1999, p. viii).

Discussion

This sample of older travelers was unique in some respects, and generalizations should be done cautiously in any case. However, they are fairly typical of the large growing body of mature, educated, healthy, and financially able older population (McGuire, 1996). Some of these women are experiencing a new lease on life, and are less constrained than at any other time period (Gibson, 1998; Hawes, 1988). Each of these travelers acts like a personal scientist, discovering what works for him/her in travel, attempting to use travel as a way to meet personal needs (Botterill & Crompton, 1996; Ryan, 1998). It could be argued that they are actually seeking their own selves, hoping to sense an inter-personal and

intra-personal well being as they are face to face with "foreign" objects (Wang, 1999). While all of these travelers learned to travel at a younger age, retirement provides the time to pursue their dreams. To the extent that they use travel simply to stay stimulated or maintain appearances, they may be serving continuity needs (Zimmer, Brayley, & Searle, 1995), but to the extent that they let their travel experiences wash over them in some ways, their perspective may well be changed and on rare occasions their lives may be transformed. Although transformation is a factor, the main impact of travel for this sample became the daily issue of learning, learning about self, home, the world, and trusting others.

An important feature of these interviews is that beyond pictures and unique stories, each participant was eager to share a multitude of details concerning what he or she learned during their trips. Knowledge such as how to get around, the challenge of negotiating difficulties in a foreign country, learning about geography, learning about the local culture, and meeting the local citizens was discussed by each participant. As expressed earlier, this nature of learning about self, home, trust, and the world was the dominant theme in these findings.

Each member of the sample discussed learning something new, interesting, or surprising. Of special interest was the mentioned "surprise-learning," spontaneous information from tour guides, or reading pamphlets, or a conversation with a local that seemed to match the moment in a trip. For example, Mr. and Mrs. Belarus feel completely free and knowledgeable to ride their city's subway system after having surprisingly negotiated the Paris subway system. The role of the tour guide as well as the role of the planning before the trip was discussed by the participants. One interviewee said, "A tour guide can make or break a trip." Even if one is traveling alone, somewhere on a trip the traveler will encounter and be a part of a tour group. If the tour guide incorporates personal reflection, and allows for discussion and questions, the learning can take on a special significance.

Of special note was the tour guide mentioned by Mr. And Mrs. Israel. This man was familiar with the area, he was personally involved, and he also was a fellow traveler with this group to the holy sites in Israel. His purpose in this trip was "renewal" for the participants and that this trip would transcend a vacation to become a pilgrimage. From the moment they arrived in the airport, until they returned home this man attempted to teach, to inspire, to encourage discussion, and to impact their life. Every place they went there was discussion beyond the typical tour guides, an incorporation of devotions, prayer, and purposeful reflection were also part of this particular trip.

Seeing something for the first time seemed to augment learning in travel. The impact of standing in a meaningful place, or seeing something personally important face- to-face takes the traveler on a trip to the authentic. In addition, seeing something for the first time seems to give the traveler a strong memory of the locale. Many of the sample could describe in detail the sights, sounds, and smells of significantly important places they saw many years previous. The impact of seeing a real castle on the Rhine River, or the Eiffel Tower for the first time, or the tomb of Jesus compels the traveler to sense that he/she has discovered the authentic (Wang, 1999), even though the urban surroundings may look like

many large cities around the world.

Travel in a foreign country may precipitate Mezirow's disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow, 2000). Language, money, travel directions, location of a certain address all present miniature disorienting dilemmas. Although not a life crisis situation, each traveler pointed out that learning how to manage these details resulted in greater self-confidence and learning. Seeing how these negative situations become positive experiences impacted each person. When things go wrong, the reaction of the traveler and its ensuing situations can become its own lesson. Mrs. Maine said, "Every day is an adventure, we just get up and go, and see what adventure awaits us!" While travel experiences can surely be profound, their potential to be transformative has not been extensively addressed. Mezirow (1991) defined a transformative experience as,

The process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and finally making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings" (p. 167).

This is the result of a process that begins with some type of experience that does not fit within the boundaries of the learner's meaning perspective. A common theme of Mezirow's theory is the centrality of critical reflection to this process. Critical reflection is challenging our presuppositions or "becoming aware of our awareness and critiquing it"(Mezirow, 1981, p.13). Critical reflection is a distinguishing characteristic of adult learning (Brookfield, 1995). Anything that moves an individual to a more inclusive, or permeable point of view, will aid an adult's development (Mezirow, 1991). For example, the word "transformative" is used to describe travel in Ross and Wall's (1999) article on ecotourism. They outlined eco-tourism as travel which is purposeful, environmentally responsible, and transformative. "Many people travel to natural areas to indulge in experiences with nature, and these experiences have the potential to instill transformative values" (Ross and Wall, 1999, p. 128). In a similar vein, Cohen and Counts (2000) discuss transformation as the result of a one-week class that incorporates travel and study.

Rather than becoming enmeshed with fellow travelers, these travelers seemed to learn more when there was interaction with locals. Mr. and Mrs. Belarus can not get the images of people they met out of their mind, Mr. Maine's conversations with natives in Afghanistan, and Mr. Brazil's discussions with his host family all point to the power of change as a result of interaction with natives or locals. Mrs. Germany's daily conversations with her German friends and family seemed to cement her trip far more than a tour guide, museum, or book could accomplish.

Participants stated some of the implications of travel for them are that they have learned more about other cultures, religions and groups of people. They expressed how learning to travel, and learning how to get around in a foreign country becomes its own educational experience. The resulting confidence prepares one to travel again, as well as to encourage others to take trips. This increased knowledge of travel is one of self-confidence about the world, those living in the world, and of one's

self. Seeing how difficult situations are worked out, experiencing 'miracles' on the trip, strengthens one's faith and beliefs.

An important consideration for researchers may be the lack of personal reflection by travelers. Learning in travel is the genre of reflection, evaluation, or critical reflection (Brookfield, 1995). Yet many of the participants had never intensely thought about the impact of their trip. Most people want to share about the places they visited rather than what they learned. Yet, listeners give their friends only brief moments to share highlights from a three-week European tour. Common questions are, "Tell me, what is the highlight of your trip?" or "What is one thing you liked best about Italy?" This miniature narrative of a busy western life does not encourage the traveler to be reflective. In addition, the cultural expectation of "getting back and getting busy" may dilute any potential learning as a result of the travel. Mrs. Germany stated a similar frustration, "I have a suitcase upstairs full of pictures and memorabilia from a year ago that I just can't get to." Travelers have closets and bags full of pictures, souvenirs, and notes that comprise a potential for learning tossed aside by a culture not suited for reflection in action or reflection on action (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999).

However, reflection and thinking did take place in a variety of ways for each of these travelers resulting in greater depth of learning. For example, each married couple would discuss the trip with one another and with family members. Mr. and Mrs. Belarus, and Mrs. Germany, stayed with family members while on a trip, and Mr. Brazil stayed with a host family, allowing for many opportunities to dialogue daily concerning their experiences. Journaling and picture taking are also subtle forms of chronicling events that may force the traveler to consider the learning that occurs during a trip. Of the eight participants, only two took detailed notes of their trip. Mr. Tandem wrote a 5,000-page book about his bicycle trip across the world, and Mrs. Israel kept daily notes and a travel diary.

In Josef Pieper's (1952) book on leisure and culture, he encourages the reader to return to Aristotle's perspective on life by focusing on contemplation. This type of reflection can easily be incorporated into the realm of travel. In addition, Csikszentmihalyi's (1977) concept of flow may be the missing perspective of travel for the bored or mindless tourist. If the motivated traveler can sense that he/she is in control, the resulting autotelic experience may add potential for flow to the trip. The travel industry can promote learning in leisure by including ingredients of problem solving, risk, comradeship, and personal ownership to meet the needs of travelers. De Grazia (1962) challenges the busy Westerner to pursue a simpler life where "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" can occur. Scholars should explore ways in which travel can promote this liberating leisure. This would involve trips characterized by interaction with locals, time alone for reflection, and an unhurried pace. Travel has the potential to impact travelers as well as the surroundings of various ports of call. As shown by Litvin (1998), travel can perhaps become the missing aspect of promoting peace around the world. He quotes John F. Kennedy, "Travel has one of the great forces for peace and understanding in our time…."(as cited in Litvin, 1998). Travel can transcend the tradition of wanton leisure and excessive pleasure by

focusing on what Houle (1984) describes as deliberately educative travel. These excursions of self-directed purpose have the potential to teach the traveler whatever they wish and to continue education for the length of a lifetime. I close with a quote from 89 year-old energetic and relentlessly positive Mr. Maine, who is looking forward to his trip next year, "Yeah, we are climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro next year, it's 23,000 feet, it's not a very difficult climb."

References

Bas, D. (1992). Social and cultural tourism. World Leisure & Recreation, 34, 7.

Botterill, D.T. & Crompton, J. L. (1996). Two case studies exploring the nature of the tourist's experience. Journal of Leisure Research, 28, 57-82.

Brookfield, S. (1995). Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher. (Chapter One - What It Means to be a Critically Reflective Teacher). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cohen, J. & Counts, C. (2000). The British experience: A transformative travel-study model. In C. Weissner, S. Meyer, & D. Fuller (Eds.)., Challenges of practice: Transformative learning in action (pp. 165-168). Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Transformative Learning, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1977). Beyond Boredom and Anxiety. San Francisco: Josey-Bass Publisher.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. & I. Csikszentmihalyi. (Eds.). (1988). Optimal experience: psychological studies of flow in consciousness. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1997). Finding flow: The psychology of engagement with everyday life. New York: Harper Collins.

DeGrazia, S. (1962). Of time, work, and leisure. New York: The Twentieth Century Fund.

Garrison, D. R. (1997). Self-directed learning: Toward a comprehensive model. Adult Education Quarterly, 48, 18-33.

Gibson, H. (1998). Traveling Seniors: An investigation of the Leisure-Travel Patterns of Older Adults. Paper presented at the 5th World Congress of World Leisure & Recreation Association, Sao Paulo, Brazil, October 26-30, 1998.

Haber, S. & Lerner, M. (1999). Correlates of tourist satisfaction. Annals of Travel Research, 26, 197-201.

Hawes, D. K. (1988). Travel-related lifestyle profiles of older women. Journal of Travel Research, 27, 22-33.

Horna, J. (1995). The impact of the cold climate on leisure in Canada. World Leisure & Recreation, 37, 10 - 14.

Houle, C.O. (1984). Patterns of learning: New perspectives on life-span education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Kloeze, J. W. te (1995). Cultural tourism in the Netherlands: The aspect of museum attendance. World Leisure & Recreation, 37, 23 - 30.

Knowles, M.S. (1985). Andragogy in action. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. & Davis, J. (1997). The art and science of portraiture. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Litvin, S. (1998). Tourism: The world's peace industry? Journal of Travel Research, 37, 63-66.

Maiztegui-Onate, C. (1996). Cultural tourism: New uses for cultural heritage? World Leisure & Recreation, 38, 26-28.

MacKay, K. J., Lamont, D.E., & Partridge, C. (1996). Northern ecotourists and general tourists: An intra-provincial comparison. Journal of Applied Recreation Research, 21, 335-355.

McGuire, B. (1996). Leisure and aging: Ulyssean living in later life. Champaign, IL: Sagamore Publishing.

Maslow, A. (1970). Motivation and personality. New York : Harper & Row.

Merriam, S. (1998). Qualitative research and case study applications in education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. & Caffarella, R. (1999). Learning in adulthood. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective Transformation. Adult Education, 28, 100-110.

Mezirow, J. (1981). A critical theory of adult learning and education. Adult Education, 32, 3-24.

Mezirow, J. (1991). Transformation theory and cultural context: A reply to Clark and Wilson. Adult Education, 41, 188-192.

Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning as Transformation. (Chapter One). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Milman, A. (1998). The impact of tourism and travel experience on senior traveler's psychological well-being. Journal of Travel Research, 37, 166-170.

Panic-Kombal, T. (1998). Croatia - A model of modernization in Europe? World Leisure & Recreation, 40, 7 - 15.

Panic-Kombal, T. (1996). The Cultural Heritage of Croatian Cities as a Tourism Potential. World Leisure & Recreation, 38, 21 - 25.

Patton, J. (1990). Qualitative evaluation and research methods. London: Sage Publications.

Pearce, P. (1988). The Ulysses factor. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Pieper, J.(1952). Leisure, the basis of culture. New York: Random House.

Reisinger, Y. (1994). Tourist - Host contact as a part of cultural tourism. World Leisure & Recreation,36, 24 - 28.

Ross, S. & Wall, G. (1999). Ecotourism: towards congruence between theory and practice. Tourism Management, 20, 123-132.

Ryan, C. (1998). The travel career ladder: An appraisal. Annals of Tourism Research, 25, 936-957.

Ryan, C. & Glendon, I. (1998). Application of Leisure Motivation Scale to Tourism. Annals of Tourism Research, 25, 169-184.

Shoemaker, S. (1989). Segmentation of the senior pleasure travel market. Journal of Travel Research, 27, 14-21.

Seidman, I. (1998). Interviewing as qualitative research. New York: Teachers College Press.

Stein, D. (1998). Situated learning in adult education. ERIC Digest No.195. Columbus: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 1998.

Steves, R. (1999). Europe through the back door 2000. Santa Fe, NM: John Muir Publications.

Thomashow, M. (1998). Ecological identity: Becoming a reflective

environmentalist. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Urry, J. (1990). The tourist gaze - leisure and travel in contemporary societies. London: Sage Publication.

Vierda, V.(1998). Dubrovnik - Five years without tourism: The new meaning of leisure, culture, and tourism for reconstruction. World of Leisure & Recreation, 40, 15-21.

Wang, N. (1999). Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience. Annals of Tourism Research, 26, 349-370.

Williams, P. (1992). Tourism and the environment: No place to hide. World of Leisure & Recreation, 34, 13-17.

Zimmer, Z., Brayley, R. E., & Searle, M. S. (1995). Whether to go and where to go: Identification of important influences on senior's decision to travel. Journal of Travel Research, 33, 3-9.